

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3494
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SANA

S E C R E T TEHRAN 6135

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: SO, US, UR, ET, MASS, PDEV, MOPS
SUBJ: CHANGING SOMALIA ATTITUDES

REF: STATE 148789, STATE 161221

1. ON SEVERAL SOCIAL OCCASIONS RECENTLY SOMALIA AMBASSADOR SHARMANI HAS APPROACHED THE DCM PROBING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT U.S. ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA, U.S. ATTITUDES TOWARD SOMALIA AND PROFESSING SOMALIA INTERESTS IN IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND OTHER WESTERN AND ARAB COUNTRIES. THRUST OF SHARMANI'S REMARKS HAS BEEN THAT NOW THAT USSR HAS DECIDED TO HELP ETHIOPIA AND SUPPORT ETHIOPIAN EFFORTS TO HANG ON TO SOMALIA TERRITORY, SOMALIA'S HANDS ARE NO LONGER TIED WITH RESPECT TO DEVELOPING RELATIONS WITH THE WEST. SHARMANI SAID THAT
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SOMALIA IS GRATEFUL FOR PAST SOVIET ASSISTANCE, WHICH HAD BEEN FORTHCOMING WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED, AFTER SOMALIA HAD BEEN TURNED DOWN BY THE WEST AND IT WILL NOT TURN AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION NOW EVEN THOUGH IT WAS HELPING SOMALIA'S ENEMY, ETHIOPIA. NEVERTHELESS SOMALIA WAS NOW EXPLORING OTHER OPTIONS INCLUDING ASSISTANCE FROM U.S., SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN. HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT SAUDI

ARABIA WILL BE WILLING TO HELP BUT IT MUST UNDERSTAND THAT SOMALIA WAS FIRMLY DEDICATED TO SOCIALIST PRINCIPLES AND COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO CHANGE ITS IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION IN RETURN FOR ASSISTANCE. SOMALIA THOUGHT THAT THESE PRINCIPLES WERE BEST SUITED TO ITS NEEDS AND WERE ACCEPTED AND SUPPORTED BY ITS PEOPLE. AS FAR AS THE U.S. WQS CONCERNED HE THOUGHT THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION BEING UNENCUMBERED WITH LINKS TO ETHIOPIA WAS IN A BETTER POSITION TO EVALUATE THE SITUATION IN THE AREA AND HOPED THAT IT WOULD FIND IT IN ITS BEST INTERESTS TO HELP SOMALIA. HE ALSO EXPRESSED GENERAL OPTIMISM THAT IRAN WOULD BE OF SOME HELP ECONOMICALLY AND MILITARILY BUT MADE NO MENTION OF THE FORTHCOMING IRANIAN MILITARY MISSION VISIT TO SOMALIA. HE DID ACKNOWLEDGE, HOWEVER, THAT SOMALIA HAD ASKED IRAN FOR "A VERY MODEST AMOUNT" OF SMALL ARMS AND AMMUNITION.

2. DCM'S RESPONSE HAS BEEN VERY GENERAL, PROFESSING LACKING OF AREA EXPERTISE AND DETAILED KNOWLEDGE OF HORN OF AFRICA AFFAIRS. HE DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT HE UNDERSTOOD A U.S. ECONOMIC MISSION HAD BEEN DISPATCHED TO SOMALIA TO SEE WHETHER THERE MIGHT BE OPPORTUNITIES FOR US TO DEVELOP A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP. WHILE HE HAD NO IDEA OF THE POSSIBLE OUTCOME OF THIS OR ANY OTHER INITIATIVE, HE SAID HE THOUGHT WE WELCOMED THE BEGINNING OF A DIALOGUE.

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3. SHARMANI IS A CAREER MILITARY OFFICER WHO CLAIMS LONG MILITARY SERVICE AND A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH PRESIDENT BARRE. HE APPARENTLY HAD SOME MILITARY EDUCATION AND/OR TRAINING IN ITALY AND SPEAKS ITALIAN FLUENTLY. HIS ENGLISH IS ALSO GOOD. HE FORMERLY SERVED AS SOMALIA MILITARY ATTACHE IN CAIRO AND MOSCOW. WHEN ASKED HOW HE CAME TO BE APPOINTED AMBASSADOR, SHARMANI LAUGHED AND SAID THAT PRESIDENT BARRE HAD GOTTEN FED UP WITH CONSERVATIVE CAREER DIPLOMATS WHO SEEMED PRINCIPALLY OCCUPIED WITH PROTOCOLAR NICETIES AND DECIDED TO APPOINT OFFICERS WHO MAY NOT BE SO POLISHED BUT WERE AT LEAST MORE ENERGETIC IN CARRYING OUT SOMALIA'S FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES. SHARMANI HIMSELF IS HARDLY A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH AND HAS STRUCK US ON THE FEW OCCASIONS WE HAVE SEEN HIM AS A SMOOTH AND EFFECTIVE ENVOY.

SULLIVAN

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